

George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

Bowdoin College Library, 3000 College Sta., Brunswick, Maine 04011

© Bowdoin College

Mike Hastings, Anita Jensen, Estelle Lavoie, and Mary McAleney
Round Table

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

GMOH# 022

July 21, 2008

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project at Bowdoin College, the date is July 21, 2008, and we are at Preti Flaherty in Portland, Maine. And today I have with me Mary McAleney, Anita Jensen, Mike Hastings, and Estelle Lavoie. Larry Benoit should be joining us a little bit later [Benoit remained absent]. I'd just like to open up the discussion and the interview today by talking first about his [i.e. Senator Mitchell's] initial appointment to the Senate to fill Ed Muskie's term, and we were talking about sort of what was the experience like. Three of you came into the office from Muskie's staff, and the other two came on board new.

Anita Jensen: Well, not really new. Mary had worked for Ed Muskie before.

Mary McAleney: I was on the campaign stuff, yes, so I was a known entity.

AJ: Yes, you were.

MM: And I worked on the campaign, and then I actually went down to Washington in the fall of '84.

AJ: Was it that late?

MM: Yes, it was, it was right before you [*speaking to Mike*] left for...

Mike Hastings: Right, right, you were just -

EL: And it was after I left and before Michael left.

AJ: Oh, that's right, because you started out doing housing.

MM: I did housing and then I did -

AJ: For a while, because Estelle had gone.

MM: Yes, I did housing and labor, and then Gayle invited me out to her house one evening, as only Gayle could, you know, with the bourbon and the cigarettes.

Estelle Lavoie: Filtered Pall Malls.

MM: And said, let me talk to you, she said, now just what do you think George Mitchell needs the most help on, figuring out where to go in Maine, who to talk to, and taking care of Maine, or being told how to vote on a housing issue?

AJ: That he knows more about than you would ever know.

MM: Exactly, than you ever will. I said, "Um, scheduling?" She said, "Yes." So that's how I switched, yes, it didn't take Gayle long to figure out what my skills were, yes, and what was needed, because that was Gayle.

Mike Hastings: How long did you do legislation before you became [scheduler]?

MM: Oh, about five minutes.

MH: And it didn't take very long, because I -

MM: No. It was about maybe, no, because I was doing the scheduling in about two weeks after I got there, as well as legislative stuff, and Gayle [knew] it didn't work.

AJ: I think you worked on some legislative stuff for a few months.

MM: Yes, I kept housing for a little while. Anita saved me, like she saved everybody else.

AJ: It wasn't a good fit, and as Mary says, he didn't need us. It's not like he didn't know how he felt about housing programs, for God's sake.

EL: Well, it's also true that he was not on the Senate Banking Committee, so that he did not ever put a lot of time into housing legislation. I mean there was housing legislation that came to the floor for votes, but he did no committee work because he was not on that committee.

MM: But later on, you know, people like Grace [Reef] and Bobby Rozen did a lot of work on that and they made a big, huge legacy in the housing, you know, as time went on, a huge legacy, yes, yes.

AJ: Yes, well he, when the Senator first came, we all trooped down, as I remember, to the White House, where President Jimmy Carter sat us all around a table and said, well Senator Muskie has agreed to join the administration as secretary of state, which is what I think of when I say Muskie turned into a pumpkin, you know, because he did. He just went, you know, one day he was there and the next day he was all, so bye-bye. And they had a, there was a reception where Muskie was sworn in that Mitchell came to as the incoming - he hadn't been sworn in - and there was a month hiatus between the two members. And in the course of that hiatus we

sorted out I'd say a bit of staff stuff. You know, we got the Muskie records, for instance, shipped up to Lewiston – [I'm] sure it was – you know, getting them out of the file cabinets. And some of the people who were at that time on the staff decided that they would really rather have a month off than keep working, and mostly we thought, yes, well that's good riddance, right, you know, bye-bye.

And then Mitchell started, and he was a little diffident when he first began. A cop would challenge him as he walked into the building, to open his briefcase, and he would stand there and open his briefcase. He's a senator; senators do not do that. Regina [Sullivan] caught the cop doing that once, and went charging out of the office screaming, senator, "This is Senator Mitchell," and the poor cop turned several shades of purple and muttered these apologies and backed off down the hallway running. It was pretty, really pretty funny because Mitchell just wasn't used to living on a plantation, which is what the Senate basically was, you know, there were the white bosses, senators, and then there were us non-[]bosses, so to speak. And we did the scut work, you know. We expected to have our bags gone through and so on when we entered or left a building, but not the Senator, good heavens, you know. So, that was before X-ray machines, now they have X-rays of course, but back then it was just a sort of, you know, the cops would make you open it up if they thought you looked [suspicious]; usually the cops knew who you were because you'd been coming and going so long.

MH: Through the same entrance.

AJ: Yes, exactly. But it was sort of, it was pretty funny. And one of the sad things when you become a new senator is that they kick you out of whatever really nice cushy set of offices you have inherited, and they kick you to the crummiest, nastiest office space that nobody else wants, because you get to be last in choosing which office you'd like to occupy. So we had, Muskie had this terrific suite on the ground floor, first floor, in Russell, and we got jerked upstairs to the third floor with about one-third of the space, so we were all sitting on each other's laps, so to speak. It was really chummy. And it was sort of, not pleasant, because it's still true, in the Senate, when the bells go off, you know, and you want to be counted as having voted, you have to leave your office and go physically to the Capitol, where the Senate chamber is. From the first floor it's pretty easy: you walk down one flight of steps and you're on the subway and it's all over, right? But on the third floor, you wait for the elevator, and that takes you down and then you catch the subway, and it takes a lot longer so it creates more of an interruption in your workday, if you're a member. It's different, you know. I don't know, you remember that, Estelle?

EL: The Senator's first day, when he was sworn in, was May 19th of 1980.

AJ: And we first tackled the draft, Selective Service, Cambodia, which had just then finished killing itself, or being attacked by the Khmer Rouge, and some other damn thing that was equally disgusting, I can't remember what it was. But we had about three or four all-nighters.

MH: Right in May.

AJ: Right in May and June, yes. And Mitchell invented this anecdote which he told, about how when the Senate is in session late they sometimes put up cots in the hallways off the Senate chamber, which they do, so members can lie down and snooze. And he said he was there, and he looked up and he realized he was sleeping right opposite John Warner. And at that time period, John Warner was married to Elizabeth Taylor, and Mitchell said he had been feeling sorry for himself, and then he realized that John Warner could have been at home in bed with Liz Taylor.

MH: As opposed to sleeping with George Mitchell.

AJ: But he embellished that story and told it for the next fifteen years.

MH: It almost paralleled the cow joke.

AJ: Yes, well the cow joke got woven into it. The cow joke was that he was up in some Maine county -

MM: Vassalboro.

AJ: Yes, and he was talking about whether or not it was a good idea to ship these cows to Saudi Arabia, and the farmer said, “You ask me, we should have sent you and kept the cows.” You know, that sort of thing – so that was the cow joke.

MH: It’s amazing, I mean it’s an interesting little story but it’s not that funny.

AJ: No, it’s, at least it’s funny.

EL: But the way he was able to tell it.

AJ: Well it was partly because back then we were scrambling for every line of press that we could get [to] acknowledge that he was: a) alive; b) a senator, and; c) up for election.

MH: Well I’ll have you know that just about a year ago, I think it was last September, the Mitchell Water Institute at the University of Maine started an annual speech, you know, lectureship, and the Senator was there in Orono to introduce, oh, the fellow who’s the head of the Yale School of Forestry to give this speech. And the gentleman, the lecturer, at the end of his speech, he had a cow joke that was different, a different cow joke. And Mitchell rose to the bait and he said, I can, he got up, he got up, and I had been telling people that, you know, I’m sure that he won’t tell the cow joke. Mitchell got up and he said, “I just cannot be outdone,” [and] he told the cow joke in September. And I couldn’t believe it, I couldn’t believe it, it was just exactly the way he used to tell it.

MM: Do you remember that he said that when he was elected, once he got elected, he would never tell the cow joke again. That’s what he said.

AJ: He lied, he lied.

MM: Because if you go back, if you remember back in 1974, when he ran for governor, and here was this guy who, you know, 'I cannot tell a lie, I cannot tell a joke.' He was very serious, very deadpan, very egghead, very intellectual. So part of the challenge that he had was to appear, to let himself be himself and be down-to-earth and be funny and connect with people. So that's why, you know, the Liz Taylor joke was, it was ---

AJ: Heaven sent, yes.

MM: And he can still tell it, and it still is funny. And the cow joke, as Mike said.

MH: I was with him, I came up a month before the campaign and stayed down at Pine Point, and I drove him around some of that, during that month, because I wasn't really much use in other, for other reasons. And I went to an event in which they extracted the promise that he wouldn't tell, that if he got elected, he would promise not to tell the cow joke after he got elected. I mean, he told it that often, I mean people would just, people would howl about it, even when they'd heard it four or five times.

EL: Do you remember election night in Lewiston, in Lewiston at Steckino's I think it was.

MM: Yes, wherever we were.

EL: Whatever was the restaurant, he told the cow joke.

MH: Happy Jack's.

MM: Well, and that was, and Edie McCray, remember Edie, she was like our star volunteer, she fed us, and she came in dressed as a cow. She was dressed as a cow, and there was some other woman, whose name I don't remember, was leading her. Well, here's this guy who just won United States senator by about thirty-seven points, it's amazing he ever actually hired me, you know. Of course Estelle was there with me, but that was not of her doing. But that woman did dress up as a cow that night, and it was in the front page of the Lewiston paper, and I never heard him tell the joke since, until you said that.

MH: Oh yes, (*unintelligible*) September.

AJ: He never stopped telling the damn thing.

MH: I'm always interested to hear about how, though, the fact that he couldn't tell a joke in '74, that was, I mean that he couldn't appear to have a light side, I guess is the way -

EL: Well, he was very serious.

AJ: We were running against Dave Emery, who was heavily favored because the Republicans had just taken over the Senate majority in 1980, so that they were now organizing the Senate, in charge, and Emery was heavily favored to win, being as he was a Republican, young. And Emery used to do this good old boy, outdoorsman, Maine type, with the checked shirts and the guns, and he would write these weekly columns about the hot blood dripping into the snow as he shot some defenseless damn animal. It was just completely off the wall. And you could tell that the Senator was like, how do I compete with this, right, because he is not the good old boy type, to put it moderately, I think it's fair to say, you know. So we spent a lot of time putting together things that made, I mean it was this terrible thing where he was forced to stand on the Capitol steps with that wretched eagle, remember that eagle, that had been rescued from a certain death by some bunch of do-gooders, and the bloody thing wouldn't stop flapping its wings in Mitchell's face, and we were all sitting there waiting for it to crap all over his shoulder because, you know.

MM: Well, then there was the canoe, the canoe during the campaign.

MH: Right, where there, it was one of the first, it was the first TV shoot, I think, for his television ads, yes. They put him in the canoe and he was, somebody, he was going in the, he was sitting backwards in the canoe, you know, kind of, you know those seats where your legs are supposed to go in a certain direction, you're supposed to be facing toward the front of the canoe, and he was facing toward the back of the canoe. And they, the first, fortunately somebody caught it, saying that doesn't look right.

MM: Then I think, then somebody caught that the canoe was still tied to something. Then there was all this flat wear, the fishing pole was upside down.

AJ: Ah, yes, the Dan Quayle thing, remember he was pointing an RPG thing at himself with this guerilla, you know, I'm a guerilla fighter, photo shoot.

MM: But Dave Emery, one of the funniest, there used to be this whatever, Kennebec, Great Kennebec River Whatever Race and the float. So the Kennebec County Democrats decided they were going to have a float, which they did, and somebody had this idea that George Mitchell was going to be on the float. I said no, no, no George Mitchell on the float. Well the Republicans actually got Dave Emery on the float. Their float sank. We were feeling pretty good that day.

MH: That was (*unintelligible*), Dave Emery, he was, in many respects he was jinxed in many of the things that he did, although, but he was kind of, we positioned him to jinx in some cases.

AJ: He positioned himself to be jinxed in a lot of ways; I mean he was not the sharpest knife in the proverbial drawer.

EL: But getting back to our conversation before we began this tape, as Anita said, he really was jinxed because of that survey that said that Senator Mitchell had a zero percent rating on

veterans' issues, when all the votes cast on veterans' issues had been cast during Muskie's term and before George Mitchell ever came to the Senate. So it was totally misleading, and it really hurt Emery. But not only that, is that the Maine press kept bringing it up itself, and said, "Oh Emery, he's the one who accused Senator Mitchell of having a zero percent rating on veterans' issues," and the press did it over and over and over.

AJ: Well, it was priceless. I mean the reason was that Ed Muskie was the chairman of the Budget Committee, and he voted against veterans' things because they cost gazillions of dollars and we had a deficit, God help us, you know. That's why he had all those negative votes. That's also I think why George Mitchell, once the next session started, joined the Veterans' Committee.

MH: Well I remember, I was asking my wife on the drive up here today as to what she remembered most about the four years that I spent on the staff, and she said, "Well, just that you switched from Cohen to Mitchell, and then they announced that he was thirty-six points behind in the poll against him." I mean, and that was the biggest mistake I think that Emery made, was announcing that he was thirty-six points ahead. Both Mitchell's figures and Emery's figures were the same thing, they said the same thing. It's just that Mr. Emery decided to announce them publicly, and there was no place to go for Mitchell but up. And we kept repeating they were going up.

AJ: Also proof, again, if you needed it, that polls do not actually tell you what's going to happen down the road, they tell you what's happening right this minute, which is what nobody needs to know. Everybody wants to know what's going to happen, not what's going on now, we all know that, it doesn't take much. But that was sort of an interesting introduction, because Ken Curtis, who had been a governor of Maine, ran a series of advertisements in the Maine newspapers, the *Portland Press Herald*, *Bangor Daily News*, the bigger papers, inviting Maine voters to agitate for him to replace Mitchell as the party's nominee for the Senate, as the party's candidate, and apparently didn't get what you'd call a lot of takers, right, that blew out. But at the time that he started doing it, nobody really knew it was going to implode, we didn't know that, we just sort of, 'oh, talk about piling on.' I mean you've got Emery on the one hand, you've got Cohen, who was not being supportive, to put it mildly, and then you had, you know, Ken Curtis coming in, doing that. It was like, 'oh gee, thanks a million,' you know, 'we really needed that.' So it was a pretty not encouraging set of circumstances at the time. And then of course halfway through the campaign, when it became obvious that Mr. Emery was not doing so well, Cohen sent up his AA and his press secretary to help out the Emery campaign. Then the Boston papers were all over that because Maine had this tradition of genteel political races, right, remember that tradition, yes, I remember it well. But they slammed the Republicans for that. Well you know, I mean it's busted, it's a Democratic, you know, not rocket science, but it was, I don't think Emery got a lot out of that transfer of staff, do you?

MM: No, no, I don't think so. And I think, in my mind, it took a long time for Cohen and Mitchell themselves to heal that relationship, and I think that they -

AJ: Yes, but the thing you have to remember is, the very first thing he told us in '82, after the

election, was that he didn't want to hear one word from any person on his staff about Bill Cohen, nothing, you know, not a single nasty crack, like nothing, no cheap shots.

MM: Right, I know, but I still think, you know, in my mind, it would have taken a while. No, but I agree with you, because I remember when I became AA, and Tyrer, Bob Tyrer became AA for Cohen just about the same time, and he said to me, you know – Bill and he used to keep saying that, because staff would get all wrapped all around the axle and *wah-wah*, Cohen's doing this, Cohen's doing that – and he used to say, "Well, Bill Cohen and I are never going to run against each other." Just basically 'stop it.' And that was the way he approached it, and I think that after that, and after that time they had a very good, I know they had a very good working relationship and did a lot of good for the state of Maine. But I do think that Cohen realized that he probably shouldn't have done what he did.

AJ: Yes, I think he probably may have reached that conclusion. A day late and a dollar short, but what the hell.

AL: So, Estelle, you started to mention Senator Mitchell being a very serious person.

EL: Yes.

AL: When you all think about it, I mean he may always have seemed, or come across to people as very intellectual, serious about what he's doing representing the people in Maine. But he also found a way to connect with people. Do you have a sense of how that evolved?

EL: Well I think one of his attributes was his uncanny ability to remember faces and names. He had just a remarkable ability to remember names in a way that I never could, and it's amazing how that can be helpful. I had a friend in Lewiston who was an activist in the party, and he had always told me he didn't like George Mitchell, didn't like George Mitchell, and I would tell him he was crazy. And so one time there was an event in Lewiston with Senator Mitchell and my friend attended, and my friend asked for an autograph and [Senator Mitchell] began to spell his name, 'is your last named spelled blah-blah-blah-blah-blah,' and it was exactly right. After that, my friend did an about face, supported him from that day on. And I kept telling my friend that he was irrational, because why did it have to take that for him to support George Mitchell. But it just goes to show you not only how politics is local, but [] small attributes like that can make a big difference. Now, I'm sure the others have other comments.

AJ: Well, I think one of the things is he knew that everyone thought he didn't have a sense of humor, and he knew that that was something he had to actively work on, and he knew he wasn't lovable in the sense of warm, fuzzy – you know, put-your-arms-around. He's not that kind of guy. And I think he just really got down to it and did it, and worked it and worked and worked. I mean he got to the point where he had speeches that I think he could have said in his sleep, you know, because he had done. There would be the same little nuances, the same little timing pauses, the same little pause for 'cheap laugh' here, 'little applause' there. He just had it down, it was like, I realize I undercut this persona, but it was like a damn machine.

EL: He worked at that like he worked at everything else.

AJ: Yes, fanatically.

EL: I mean, the guy is an amazing worker and an amazing intellect, and I think he used that in every facet of his being. I know he did.

MH: But he didn't substitute one for the other.

EL: He never, you're absolutely right, Mike, never.

AJ: And he also was, he, I would say he didn't give the staff a whole lot of credit in the sense of piling on, like 'oh gee, you did a really great job' – this is not what you got from Mitchell. But he always had an open mind, and he took advice that he thought made sense. I remember the first half year he was there, because he was the most junior senator, he spent a lot of time presiding. That means you're sitting in the chair at the head of the Senate chamber, you don't get to speak, you get to sign your mail if you have any sense, basically. Meantime, other members are on the floor, blathering away, doing whatever it is they're doing, right. And at that point in time, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia had acquired himself a Senate historian and had proceeded to have written, or presumably helped contribute to writing, a history of the Senate, which Senator Byrd proceeded in stretches of two and three hour duration, every day, to recite, every afternoon.

And one day Mitchell came back from the floor and said, "Anita, I can't believe it, why is Byrd doing this?" And I said, "Well senator, he thinks a lot of the Senate," which he does, he's very attached to the institution. I said, "I think what you should do is write him a little handwritten note telling him how much you enjoy this." Mitchell looked at me and he said, "Oh, Anita, he wouldn't." I said, "Suit yourself, I don't care." And George went and did that, right, and the following year, when there was a vacancy on the Finance Committee, guess who?

EL: About the most powerful committee in the Senate.

AJ: Well yes, especially for fund-raising purposes.

EL: I will add one small thing that helped to soften George Mitchell's appearance to the public, his image to the public, and that was -

AJ: The striped belt?

EL: The change in eyeglasses. Throughout the '70s, and I remember when he ran for governor, he had a pair of small, severe, black frame eyeglasses.

MH: The owl glasses.

EL: Yes, that's right. And when he was first appointed senator he had all kinds of white space on his calendar, and invitations to Maine to speak and to be at dedications. So [invitations] started to trickle in, he accepted every one of course, because he wanted to become known. And I remember one day he said, "Well, whenever I travel in Maine people tell me I should change my glasses."

MH: Particularly Clyde, Clyde was always after him to change his glasses.

EL: We had told him that. So when he said, people are telling me I should change my glasses, we said that's because they're right. And so he changed to, you know, glasses that had a wider circumference, that were a paler color, and he smiled more, because he tended to have an unsmiling face but he has a beautiful smile. And so that just helped to make him more approachable. So it was a small thing but sometimes small things matter.

AJ: It's like the striped belt, remember the striped belt?

MH: That was given to him by his daughter, Andrea. And when I came in, I came into the office, I came five months after he was sworn in, and I think for the next two years, two-and-a-half years, he wore that cloth belt every single day, and it was blue with a green stripe in the middle of it. And once I said, "Does anybody know -" I says, because I only knew him actually, I always say this, I only knew the Senator through what I saw on the Senate floor during that five month period between May and then when I joined the staff, I had no personal contact other than an occasional Maine Congressional Delegation meeting, and I was incredibly impressed and that's why I wanted to work for him. But I, when I got in there I was trying to take the measure of this fellow and I couldn't, number one, he was always there when I arrived in the morning, no matter what time I came in.

AL: He was there early.

MH: He was very early, and the other thing, he always wore this green belt. And he seemed to be the most, if there was any, and I'm getting to your original question, Andrea, that why did, how did, one thing is he did not have, you did not get the impression that he even understood what Potomac fever was, he was not impressed by being in Washington D.C. He just worked all the time, you know, I mean he was so like a hard worker. Occasionally, he would disappear for an hour and we, I finally figured out that he was playing tennis with the director of the FBI, Bill Webster, who was a frequent tennis partner, and he did get a, break away and have a tennis match from time to time, but other than that he just worked so hard. And it was incredibly impressive. You know, he was never, you never got the impression that he wanted to, you know, get tickets to go to the Kennedy Center. He would try to get tickets for his constituents to go to the Kennedy Center, or be invited to some big event. But it was never, it was never for himself.

EL: I think I remember him saying once that he was just really tired in part because he never got to exercise. Because he used to exercise a lot before he came to the Senate, and then he was

so busy all the time, especially with the years, it became impossible for him [to do so], and it just contributed to enormous fatigue. But that just was all emblematic of his personal ethics of hard, hard work, and he continued to work ever harder after he became majority leader, when I think his face was quite ashen, and I would have friends who would go to Washington and would, when I was here, and they would tell me they had seen him in the Capitol and that he looked awful. He was so tired.

MM: Well you think, during that time, I mean during, actually in his entire Senate career there was always something, he always had the next goal, the next step. Because those first two years, I mean I cannot imagine how hard you guys and how hard he always worked. One of the joys of working for him of course was he always worked so you had to get up wicked early in the morning to get ahead of him, and then you couldn't do it. But then after that he became chair of the Senate Campaign Committee, that was '84, right Anita? And then he -

AJ: In '96 [*sic*: '86] we took the Senate back, the Democrats got the majority of seats. And in '88, after he was reelected to the Senate from Maine, with eighty-two percent of the vote, which really threw the fear of God into me because I thought, 'how are we going to top this?' Well you know him, he always wanted us to do better.

EL: We were worried about that, weren't we Anita?

AJ: Yes, you know, how do we do this, you know.

EL: And I remember, I was chatting with one my partners just last week about George Mitchell and what a wonderful guy he is and how hard he worked, and he brought up how, after he won election, there was one town that didn't vote for him, and I said, yes, in Aroostook County, and he went up there -

AJ: Two towns, two plantations.

MM: It was, one was in Washington County.

AJ: Okay, yes, but there were two of them.

MM: Hersey, he tied in Hersey. In Talmadge Plantation he lost, and he went to Talmadge Plantation.

AJ: Right, by four votes, right, something like that?

MM: It was more like ten to, yes, I think ten to fourteen, yes, you're right.

AJ: And the people were doing things like, "Well you know, Pete was out of town that day."

MM: They said they thought he would be a good president, but they thought the other guy

would be a better senator. This was a very, very strong presence in the little Baptist church there. But he went there, and he was at first worried about, by then he had become majority leader, so [p/o] he's flying around in his plane throughout Maine and he goes to Talmadge Plantation. [p/o] First of all he was worried that there wasn't going to be anybody there, so we got the voter list, we called everybody in town. And then I happened to grow up near there, so I started calling my friends over in Vanceboro. And so then we found out that there was a large crowd coming, then he was worried about what they wanted, because there were so many coming.

So by then of course I had become best friends with the town clerk or whoever there, so I said, "Just calling and wondering what the agenda would be and," well, you know, "We're just all very excited that he's coming here, we've never had a senator come here before. In fact," she said, "we understand that he likes chocolate so we're baking some food for him to take with him, because we know he works so hard he doesn't have time to eat lunch. So everybody, we're packing lunch and we're going to give him..." dah-dah-dah-dah. So I called him back and I said, "Senator, I think you're going to be okay, because that crowd doesn't feed people that they don't like."

But that was him, he wanted to make sure, you know, and -

AJ: Touched all the bases.

MH: He has a habit of always wanting to learn, too. I mean that's what, going back a little bit, I mean that's what impresses me about what I learned about the 1974 gubernatorial campaign, and then the subsequent campaigns, is that he learned, he, open-minded to changing himself and in being more flexible. And people have told me that he used to write long position papers for the '74 campaign and, you know, that was primarily what it was known for, that campaign, but that he changed as he went along in his subsequent campaigns. He must have if he had only Talmadge and Hersey against him.

AJ: It was, but I was certainly worried about the year 2000, I thought, or '94 [*sic*: '92]. If he ran again, how are we going to, how do you improve on eighty-two percent?

MM: Yes, your candidate would have been yourself.

EL: I mean it was obvious there were a tremendous number of Republican votes, and I know some Republicans who would say, "I know talent when I see it." There was just no question.

MH: And having worked for both Mitchell and Cohen, by the time I left in '84 it was already apparent that a lot of Cohen's backers were also Mitchell's backers and, you know, which I think is one reason why they worked out kind of a relationship that they could be effective together in the Senate. I mean there were a lot of people across the aisle who voted for, Republicans who voted for, George Mitchell.

AL: Now, one of the best people to have this next question of would probably have been Gayle Cory, but I'm going to ask if any of you have a perspective on it. And the question is about the transition of Senator Mitchell to Washington, and his family's transition, do any of you have a sense or perspective of how -

AJ: He came down by himself. I used to drive him to work every day, because he stayed in one of those hotels, you know, the, you remember those guys, can't remember.

MM: They were right on the Hill?

AJ: No, across Rock Creek Park from where I lived. I was in Mt. Pleasant and they were right at the end of Calvert Street, you know, that -

MH: The Woodmont, or the Wood-

AJ: You know, the big hotel, I can't remember, Shoreham?

MH: Shoreham, Woodbury Park.

AJ: Yes, and I would go over there and pick him up and drive him, and then we would stop by the Brooks Brothers and he would go in and order another navy blazer, because you can never have too many navy blazers, apparently, and you know, I'd sit there in traffic being sworn at by everybody on 19th Street, needless to say, well double parked in front of Brooks Brothers, you know, and we would drive to work and I would tell him what I thought was coming up that day in the Senate. And he used to [complain] to me how the Senate was extremely disorganized, and he, a federal judge, had known what his docket was going to be months ago. And I was sort of sitting there thinking, 'yes, right, good.' Well, what do you say? You can't say, you know, "Senator, you're so full of it." I don't think that goes over too well.

MM: This is different, this is a very different place.

AJ: Right, right, not a federal courtroom.

EL: It was fun for you to do that.

AJ: Oh, it was so much fun. I used to drive this rattletrap old VW bug, right, that had no heat in it at all, so I mean in the winter I had to put a rug over my knees just to get to work because it was so bloody cold.

MH: That must have been the reason why he got Shep Lee to lend him that really big comfortable car that -

AJ: Might have been.

MH: - he was driving by the time I arrived. David Lemoine was driving.

AJ: Yes, I mean I can't say I blame him. He's not that tall a man, but that was also a little car, I'm short, you know, didn't hurt me.

MM: I remember once Gayle Cory telling, I guess she had gone over to his apartment, and I don't know if it was the one at the Shoreham or not, but she said to me, do you know how he lives, and I said no. She said, he lives in a very small apartment, might have been a studio, with an unplugged refrigerator. That he lived so Spartan a life, he was never there, he had no creature comforts whatsoever. And of course his family, his then-wife Sally and daughter Andrea, continued to live in Maine.

AJ: No, they never came, they never lived down there. Sally went to Russia with him. He did a trip to the Soviet Union in -

MH: That would have after '80, it was after I left, so it was after October of '84.

AJ: Yes, would have been, it was the mid-'80s. Because Grace had just started with us, and she wasn't hired until some time in the first five years.

MM: And it was after I came down there, too, so it was after '84.

AJ: So Sally went to the Soviet Union with him. Back in those days there were people, Jews trying to emigrate, and he met with some of them and so on and, you know, wrote a little couple of weekly columns on it. But aside from that, when I threw a party for Estelle when she was leaving, and he brought Sally to that. I think it may have been the last time they ever went out together, I guess.

EL: Right, she did not particularly like politics.

MH: Which is interesting, because he met her, when he was working as a -

AJ: LA.

MH: LA, but executive assistant to Senator Muskie, she was working in Styles Bridges' office across the hall.

AJ: Yes, she was a personal secretary.

MH: She must have gotten her fill of it then and decided to give it a rest.

EL: I think he met her in church, on Capitol Hill, I think on a Sunday. I think he met her at Mass, so they were both Catholic, and obviously they both had some political inclinations because they both were Senate staff. But she did not particularly want to attend political events

in Maine, and she did not want to move to Washington. She was a very private person.

AJ: She didn't even move to Bangor when he got the judgeship. I mean they had a house in South Portland where Sally stayed, and I guess he went up to Bangor, presided over the District Court, but she never would. I didn't quite understand that myself, but then I'm, what can I say, I'm still married to the first guy I ever married.

EL: Well you know, I think we became accustomed to the fact that she was not interested in politics, and you know, and that was okay. And that was between the two of them.

MM: And she was an artist, and she had a beautiful home there where she could paint. And she was in, and I tell you that in that '84 campaign she was out a lot [campaigning].

End of Side A
Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

MH: I do remember when they came down for the swearing[-in] at inaugural, though, it was fun. Because I remember Andrea was there, and the brothers and sisters were all there.

EL: In May of 1980.

MH: Right, that was a very happy day.

AL: Are we talking about Johnny and Robbie and -?

MM: Well, there's his wife and daughter, and then there are his three brothers -

EL: And his brother-in-law and his sister Barbara.

MM: And, yes, I remember when it was either, it must have been, it was probably the day that Clinton was inaugurated, I don't remember, it was one of those sort of big brouhaha big things, and people were coming in and out, I was in the Russell Senate office.

AJ: (*Unintelligible*).

MM: You were still there, yes.

AJ: Yes, I was over at the Capitol holding the potty party for the governors' wives and daughters. The Capitol is an old building with inadequate plumbing. The Majority Leader's Office had its own bathroom.

MH: Enough said, eh?

AJ: Well, you know, if you're a governor's wife, you don't really want to go down and stand in line in the public facility.

MM: Which was the only women's room in the Capitol, was either the, you could sneak into his office, or -

AJ: There was one right opposite Dole's, but you needed to have the key for it. I had the key to that one, and I never told anybody about it.

MM: Where Bobby and Kim worked, across the hall from that there was one. But you had to get them to unlock the door and stand in front so nobody else would come in.

AJ: No, the one I'm thinking about was definitely up on Dole's corridor, and the Cloakroom girl had the key. And when I found out she had the key, we cut a deal: I said I won't tell anybody, but give me the key when I need the key, you know, so duck in the Cloakroom, grab the key and, really, it makes sense, the plumbing in the Capitol is -

MM: When you had to go, you had to go.

AJ: - is prehistoric.

MM: I think after all the other, the group of women, in which was that, '92, got elected?

AJ: Yes, they got elected, but it wasn't until after '96 or '98 that they started agitating for their own potty.

MM: They got their own potty after that, yes.

AJ: Sort of near the LBJ room, I think, further down I guess. But, well you know, where were they supposed [to go]?

MM: Well, it tells you what a male institution it still is, women didn't get their own toilet until 1996 or '4 or something.

AJ: Yes, right, it was, it took a lot of agitating.

EL: But there had to be numbers, clearly, there had to be greater numbers of women before the men would listen.

AJ: Because all we had was, in Mitchell's last two years we had both the Californians, you know, Di Fi and Barbara Boxer, and we had what's her name from Maryland, Barbara Mikulski.

MH: You called her Di Fi, right?

AJ: Yes, Dianne Feinstein, sure.

MH: I was in Africa during this time, Di Fi, okay.

AJ: Everybody called her Di Fi. Well, we thought of it as her name. Besides, she was always very pleasant to me – I liked Di Fi.

MM: You want to tell some other names? We shouldn't probably waste the tape, but did you want to tell some other names.

AJ: No, no, I do not.

EL: Because they're not repeatable in polite company?

AJ: Many of them are probably best not repeated. Yes, no, I wish -

EL: Plead the Fifth.

AJ: I mean, I don't think of Di Fi as a derogatory name, it's more a nickname and meant in a friendly spirit, you know.

AL: It's catchy.

AJ: Yes, yes, and she also successfully and unexpectedly passed the wretched machine gun ban, remember the automatic, which since I covered gun control issues, sort of ruled my life for the next several months. I mean, she brought up this amendment, it passed – which no one expected – to ban so many submachine guns, right? And then you know what she was going to do? It was the end of the day, and she was not going to come in the following day, right, and her staffer came charging over to me and says, "She doesn't want to come in tomorrow." And I said, "She's got to come in, we're going to be on her amendment first thing." And she said, "Well, she won't listen to me." I said, "Okay, I'll go over." And I went over and talked to her and said, "You've got to be here, you can't *not* be here." And then she said, "But I have appointments in my office." And I said, "Have the office people bring them over, they can wait in the waiting room, I mean, you know, they'll be impressed that you're too busy to be sitting in your office all the time." But I mean I really had to argue with her about it, you can't just take off and, like everybody else will protect her amendment. I mean guns? You know? Well, you know, people come from all over the country, they enter the Senate, they don't have a clue what they're doing, you know, and they quite often do – it's, that's one of the good things about having quasi-permanent staff is at least we can stop them making complete idiots of themselves, you know, at least if we want to.

MM: If they're smart enough to listen.

AJ: Well yes, yes, this is a two-way street. That was, Mitchell did that once. There was an anti-immigrant vote, first year, first half-year he was there, and I said don't vote for this, this is a disgusting vote. I said Danforth will have a middle-of-the-road thing, because Danforth always comes up with one of those, you know, split-the-difference amendments after the bad one had been defeated. So George ignored me, voted for the stupid thing, and of course Danforth came up with a nice middle-of-road amendment, and he came back from the floor and said, "I should have listened to you." Should'a, bet your ass, what do you think, I'm making this up? Well, you know, I mean he did have this tendency to act as though you were sort of inventing it, right? Oh yes, you know.

AL: I'd be interested to know what you all experienced in terms of his working process and thinking process when he was involved in a particular issue, or with you it would have been maybe a speech of an issue, or, do you have a sense of what his process was to come to conclusions and?

MH: I'll throw this out to begin the discussion. I recall that on votes that he was uncertain really almost to the, in those cases when he was uncertain as to how he was going to vote, he would from time to time have different people writing different parts of his speeches. One for it and one against it, or he'd sometimes ask Anita to -

AJ: I did both.

MH: To do both, which I thought was sort of an interesting way to do it.

AJ: An interesting intellectual exercise.

MH: It's also interesting that Anita could actually do that. I thought that was a, I had, you know, I would have -

AJ: (*Unintelligible*).

MH: Right, and so I mean in those cases, you know, I mean he, actually very judge-like, like getting opposing briefs.

MM: Listening to both sides.

MH: Listening to both sides, but he would basically use the staff to bring out all these different points, talking points, and then he would pick and choose which ones he wanted to ultimately be in the statement.

AJ: I also think he did less of that as time went on, because he became more and more assured with the issues. I mean, 1) I had, what I generally [thought of as] the really crummy issues – prayer in the schools, gun control, abortion, civil rights, religious discrimination, you name it. If it was a really crappy issue it was mine. And I know one time, he was going on a

Sunday talk show, and it was in the first George Bush presidency. It was shortly after we'd had a vote on an abortion issue, right, and he, being newly minted majority leader, had these, I think it was CBS, they sort of said, "But you voted for Medicaid funding (or whatever it was), and before you became majority leader you voted against it, right. So, you know, you're contradicting yourself, explain this." It was one of those gotcha jobs. And he sat there, on the screen, you know, with the camera dead on him and said, "Yes I did," he said, "I was wrong, I've changed my mind." You know, what's the reporter to say? He said, "I was wrong," you know. Shut him right up and they changed the subject.

EL: Isn't it also true, Anita, that you would sometimes, as it were, go into the lion's den, you'd go into his office and the two of you would argue and scream about, you know, the different points to make on an issue and how to vote? I thought I remember David Johnson shutting the door behind you, after you went in there, because like you were going to go at it for awhile. And then [you] would come out, and then I guess he'd decided what he was going to do.

AL: You had very lively sessions of ferreting out -

AJ: Well, we had relevant discussions, I mean we weren't just, it wasn't a tea party.

MH: Then a half an hour later you would hear Anita, *tap-tap-tap-tap*, hear her high heels going down the hallway with the statement in hand, whatever the position was finally arrived at.

AL: Yes, and so, I mean when I've met you and we've talked over the years, you're very straightforward, shoot from the hip. Were you able to do that with Senator Mitchell? Did he-?

AJ: Yes, most of the time. I can't remember failing to share an opinion, if he asked for it. If he didn't ask for it and I knew he didn't share it, I certainly didn't volunteer it. I mean I don't see staff as being there to pick fights with the boss, you know, I really don't. That's not our function. Staff was there to prevent him [from] stepping in it, as often as possible, provide what he asked for certainly, and provide an argument when he wanted an argument, but not otherwise. I, for instance when what's-his-name, Rehnquist, yes, sorry, Nixon days. When Rehnquist was being considered to be raised to chief justice from associate justice, the Senator was pretty much inclined to go along because it was a relatively noncontroversial sort of position to take.

I strongly opposed it because I strongly opposed Rehnquist. I thought he was a creep, for perfectly good reasons, mind you, but I thought he was a creep. And Mitchell never asked me what I thought, and I knew what he thought, so I, okay, I'll be a good person, I'll just write this up the way I should, and I did and he said, "What do you think?" Really, about two hours before he went on the floor he said, "What do you think?" And I said, "I don't think he should be up there." He said, "Why not?" And I said, well, there were these two cases he decided, one where he invoked an 1896 judgment on horse stealing, you know, and I mean it was like reaching, the decision he reached, and I thought [it] inappropriate, you know, and unreasonable.

And he said, "Well, have you written about that?" I said, "Yeah, I've written a memo on it."

And he said, "Bring it to me," and he inserted the guts of my memo into his speech and voted against him. But he asked – I mean, and I didn't want to volunteer – but, I mean this is the stupidest thing you can [do], you know, it's not our function. Well, does anybody disagree with me?

MM: I would say to present all sides of an issue is staff's job. And as you said, the biggest, and the biggest thing is to prevent them from stepping in it.

AJ: Oh yes, definitely. But when you know what he thinks, because he says so, well what are you going to do.

MM: You know, I've never heard you, I've never known you, Anita, not to say what you were thinking.

AJ: If I'm asked, yes.

MM: Well, I think most of the time he asked you.

AJ: Oh, a lot of the time, yes.

MM: I can't think of somewhere where he didn't say, "What does Anita think on this?", or he was, [] he became, was majority leader longer and longer, he depended on long-time staff more and more. One of the things that he said to me was that, "I can't keep this up, I don't have time to think about things." I mean, he was depending on people like Anita more and more and more all the time.

AJ: Well, also because he knew what we were thinking, because we'd been there forever.

MM: Exactly, I mean when he first became majority leader, he didn't utilize the Democratic Policy Committee staff at all, he just kept, it was like going from, you know, Joe's Hot Dog Stand to head of McDonald's franchise with the same number of staff people. He wanted to make sure that whether it was the issues that Anita dealt with, or whether it was the veterans' issues or the forestry issues or whatever, the health issues or tax issues, that there was that Maine perspective, and that there were people there that were putting together those things that he trusted and valued their opinions.

AJ: And also who cared about his reputation, you know, not just, I mean I never knew much about Maine at that time, I really, because I hadn't spent that much time up here, and I certainly wasn't born here or anything. I mean I knew a little bit from having worked for Ed Muskie for ten years, it helps, but it is not the same as being from here, you know, it's really not the same. And you know, I mean Estelle knew, personally, half the people she dealt with up here, you know, I did not, I mean I was just a disembodied voice on the telephone sort of thing, so I always felt I had to check with Gayle, you know, Mary, somebody, like now what, you know. But I think the Senator always knew that we had been around long enough that he knew what we were

thinking, or how we thought, how we thought. I don't know what he, I don't think that he really spent a lot of time thinking about us, you know, because we aren't intrinsically interesting. Well, I don't know, are we?

MM: I think we're pretty funny.

AJ: I didn't say funny.

MH: I think he was always astounded when people stayed a long time on the staff. I remember when I left, I was only there four years, and he said to me, he said, "There's a time to work on a Capitol Hill and a time to leave." I mean he was just saying, and I now know that he was only actually working on Capitol Hill for Senator Muskie for I think it was under three years.

AJ: Oh yes, it was definitely under three years.

MH: Two, two-and-a-half years.

AJ: Something like that, yes.

MH: And then he went on. And I think he probably was very, very grateful that people stayed on, and got to a point where he could depend on them when he (*unintelligible*).

AJ: Well, especially people like Gayle, who was, you know, sort of transitioned from the one to the other and who had a real history with -

MM: And I think, too, that our jobs, Anita, every two years, when I look at what I did there, every two years his job changed.

AJ: Seemed to.

MM: So our jobs changed, you know. You know, we took, you know, if the Senate became Democratic, that's something different, you know, Bush gets, you know, we have the campaign, if Mitchell gets reelected he becomes majority leader, then we have a Democratic president, so every two years, whatever it was, there was a new challenge. So the old, you know, don't get too comfortable was the way we worked. And I think that the, it never became boring, you were never doing the same thing.

AJ: Who had time to be bored?

MM: Exactly, because of that, because if he -

EL: Well, and he became progressively busier over the years. When he started in May of 1980, there was not much for him to do. He was not on the Finance Committee, and he had few

invitations. He had a lot of white space.

AJ: And he scared the living hell out of half the staff, because he would buzz through to your telephone himself. Ed Muskie never did that. He had Carole [Parmelee] buzz through. But when you're sitting there, essentially minding your own business, swearing at whatever job it is you're trying to get done, and you get the buzzer and you pick it up, in my case you're, "Yes?" And it's: "Anita, this is the Senator." Oh, God.

EL: Anyway, he clearly evolved, where he didn't know much about the issues at the beginning, and then of course he learned more with time. I was there the first four years, almost exactly four years, from May 19th of '80 until the end of May of 1984, and he was still at that point a bit reluctant to offer an amendment or something like that on the floor. But that changed with time, as he became more used to the institution, he became more familiar with the issues, he became more confident, and he clearly relied more upon staff. And of course as he became busier with committee assignments and so forth, he had to rely on staff more and more because you [couldn't] do it all by yourself. And so he really appreciated the staff, I think. Nineteen eighty-four was an important year of transition, because several of us left who had been there from the time of his swearing in. Because I left, and then -

MH: Tom Gallagher.

EL: Tom Gallagher, and Michael left, and David Johnson I think left in that year. So I think he felt -

MM: And Charlie Jacobs.

EL: Yes, so there were several of us who had been long-termers, whom he had known, you know, I mean he had known me since 1984 and David, anyway. So it was difficult. I mean ultimately, of course, he did fine, but you could tell that he liked the familiar faces and he liked, he knew what our strengths were and that we all had some value to him. But he also understood that it was time to move on.

AL: Can you all talk a little bit about Gayle Cory and what her place was on the staff and her role with everyone else?

EL: Gayle of course had known Senator Mitchell -

AJ: When he was working for Senator Muskie.

EL: Right, so he was a young man then. And were they similar in age?

AJ: Yes, I think they must have been. Mitchell is, he's about ten or eleven years older than me.

MH: Seventy-five next month, I think.

AL: Seventy-four.

MM: And Gayle would be seventy-three, she was ten years older than we are.

AJ: Yes, exactly.

MM: They were contemporaries.

EL: Right, and so that sort of forged a bond. And Gayle had an uncanny ability to understand people, to understand the institution, she had an overall view, plus she knew Maine thoroughly. And she had such a warm personality that everybody liked her, and people from all over the state who would come to Washington would stop by to see Gayle. I mean there was a constant parade of people. And she was a unique asset, and he loved Gayle, he trusted her, relied on her, and she from time to time would weigh in, I think, on legislative issues.

AJ: Oh yes, when she felt she had something to say, she wanted to get said, you know. I don't think she was ever backward about it. She wasn't pushy, but the thing is, everybody in Maine knew her, you know, so in that sense she was like a walking advertisement for Mitchell – you know, well, sort of like, 'If Gayle works for you, you must be halfway all right.'

EL: What year was she appointed postmaster of the Senate?

AJ: The year that what's-her-name, Carole, got married.

EL: 'Eighty-eight?

AJ: I think it was '90, I believe it was '90. It might have been '89, but it might have been '90.

MM: I think it was right after he became leader; it was sometime in '89.

AJ: Okay, it might have been '89, it was when Carole got married, Gayle's daughter Carole, and Gayle's husband, Don, was diagnosed with a large tumor in his brain. It wasn't cancerous, but it needed to be operated upon and removed, and that was going to be a very lengthy operation from which recovery was going to take a long time. And one of the things that Gayle and I did, because we lived pretty close, you know, in close proximity, we would take the train home together and Don would pick us up at the station, then Henning would come to Gayle's place and pick me up and we'd go home. And we worked all sorts of hours, and with this happening to Don, Gayle knew she couldn't work those hours. And Martha encouraged Mitchell – Martha Pope, who was then the AA in the Majority Office – encouraged Mitchell to put Gayle in the Post Office, which had regular hours – and a lot more money – none of which hurt.

MM: She went over to the Leader's Office with Martha [] when he became leader.

AJ: Yes, she went over when he became leader.

MM: And then she, and that was really the first big appointment that he made, a big change in the Senate, was to appoint her postmaster.

EL: Because she was the first woman to be appointed postmaster. And she did not want to be called postmistress, it was postmaster.

MM: And she was also, she was always very proud of the fact that, she said, there was never any question about the Senate Post Office, as far as where any money was or what any stamps were used for or anything like that.

AJ: There was a scandal on the House side, postal, inappropriate activities.

MM: But even after she became postmaster, to me Gayle was the glue, she really was the glue, she was what made it all work.

AJ: Well, people used to consult with her.

MM: I always did. After I became AA, I would go down every, once a week, maybe even more often, but once a week I would make an appointment to go down and just sit with Gayle an hour, an hour and a half, and just whatever we, anytime I needed a gut check, an anchor check or anything, she was there. And I really think she had an uncanny understanding of human nature, as does Senator Mitchell, and the two of them together, you know, they understood what you can and can't do, and people are people and sometimes they'll change, and you can't change them.

EL: She had good judgment and common sense, the kind of things that you cannot learn, you cannot teach someone, she had them. And I would echo Mary's comments, she understood people, she knew people all over the state, but she also understood how people think and how they act, and so that was always a helpful barometer in deciding sometimes how you're going to play an issue if you're going to be in Maine, what you're going to say. That, you know, there's that human element that is also part of political office.

MM: And a very important part. One of my favorite Gayle quotes was, this was early on, somebody came in and said to her, so-and-so, whoever it was he was talking about, somebody from Maine, that guy's such an asshole, and Gayle said, "Yes, but he's our asshole." I mean that was, you know, cut to the chase.

EL: And sort of an additional asset that Gayle brought to the mix was her brother, Buzz Fitzgerald, who was a very, even though he had a very small firm in Bath, he represented Bath Iron Works, he was very prominent in the state, and then he became president of Bath Iron Works, which has always been the state's, at least it was then, the state's largest employer. And

while he was a Republican, he was really only nominally a Republican and was very supportive of George Mitchell, so it was wonderful to have him in the orbit because he could be helpful to us.

MM: He was so great, Buzz. I remember, after Clinton was elected, he had this big thing down in Arkansas – you probably remember this, Anita – for business leaders, and Buzz went. And Buzz told me later, he said, “You know, [] I’m down there; [] it was a great thing.” He said, “I really, it was just so wonderful being there [].” And I’m in this elevator with all these people, and he said, “I looked around [] at all these people.” And he said, “Hmm, everyone’s here [] here because they’re a friend of Bill’s, except for me, and I’m [here because I’m] a friend of Gayle’s, and I’d rather be a friend of Gayle’s any time.”

EL: They were a team, those two.

MM: Yes, they were, they were, they were very close. And you know, their respective deaths were tragic for all of us. And to show how prominent Buzz was, when he died, there was a service at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church on State Street and it was – they packed it and then had to close the doors, under the fire code, because there were so many people there. I mean everybody went, from all over the state, to go to that service. And afterward they had a reception at the art museum, which is a huge place, and [it was full] [p/o]. Everyone just felt so terrible that he had died, and died at a young age.

MM: And all walks of life, there were union workers, there were trades people, there were friends from Bath, there were attorneys, there were business leaders, I mean it was, I remember seeing the people in their union jackets and caps walking up together as a group and, yes, it was -

EL: You had to park far away from that church, I mean I just decided to walk because I was never going to get a place to park, that’s how bad it was going to be and I was not mistaken. So, so he was wonderful as well.

MM: She was just, she was an amazing person, able to balance so many things. And whether it was her family, what she did for her family, or her friends. I mean if you were a friend of Gayle’s, you were a friend of Gayle’s.

EL: That’s right.

MM: And she expected, she expected everyone to, she was just incredibly loyal. One of my other funny stories is, Gayle, one night [] we were working late, and I said, “Gayle, I’ve just got to get out of here before ten o’clock because I have no soap and no toilet paper and I have to, the convenient store stops at ten.” Never missed a beat, she said, “Grab a roll of toilet paper and a bar of soap from the bathroom and just keep right on working.”

EL: She was so practical. And it was just, you always knew you’d get good advice from her. I guess never once did I think she gave me bad advice on any topic, you know, whether it was

serious or not very serious, she just knew instinctively what to do.

MM: And generous of spirit.

AJ: Yes, she was.

MM: Generous of spirit and heart and soul.

AJ: Another thing that she brought to the Mitchell operation was inadvertent: she married a man called Don Cory. Cory is a very common Lebanese surname; Senator Mitchell of course is half Lebanese. Gayle of course is wholly Irish, right, not in the least part [Lebanese]. An unbelievable number of non-Maine Lebanese thought that she must be Lebanese, right, so they would call for case work or help with immigration cases and you name it, and they all kept saying, you know, Mrs. Cory, she will, you know, sort of thinking. Well, you know, she's Irish, get over it, you know. Well it did, it worked, people actually believed that, you know, he had hired her because she was a Leb. I mean, really.

MH: Coming from the Cohen office, there was no counterpart to Gayle in the Cohen office. And when I came to the Mitchell office I realized that, at the time there was, Jim Case was the administrative assistant when I came in October of '84, and he seemed to function as I understood AAs to function. I mean he was the chief of staff. But you realized that he was the chief of staff, but then there was Gayle, you know, and she seemed to be, to me to be like the den mother of the office. I mean because, you know, I was fascinated because all these people who I'd heard about from the other side of the aisle, like Jim Tierney and John Martin, she was just kind of this intersection when these people would come in, and Gayle would be the first person that they would go to, and Jim Case didn't seem the least bit resentful of that fact. It was just, it was assumed that Gayle was the hub for all these, the whole team, if you will, the whole, all the young Democrats, who were really to me very fascinating. Because, you know, they were coming up in the Legislature or they were running for governor or whatever, their point of intersection was Gayle, you know. And she didn't seem to, what was strange was she didn't seem to soak them for information, but yet she knew it all.

EL: That's because they told her everything. Sometimes we all bared our soul to her, everybody did.

MH: But she didn't probe them for questions, she wasn't trying to do anything like that, but it would just come out in the conversations and she'd take it all in. And the other thing about her that was really fascinating, which didn't have a counterpart in the Cohen office, was the fact that she treated the, she was a personal assistant to the Senator as well as a professional assistant, insofar as she, she was aware of family considerations that, at least at my level, I was not aware of. You know, I mean, you know, if, and she seemed to get it right in terms of, you know, if Andrea was going to graduate from high school, you know, she oriented things around the things that needed to be central. And it was fascinating to see. I think in many respects it sounded to me that she was a lot like, later I read a lot about Margaret Chase Smith and how she ran the

office for her husband, Clyde Smith, when they first came down to Washington in the '30s or early '40s and it was like that. I mean it was, I think, I wonder if, I wonder how many senators today have a person like Gayle Cory in their offices. I would guess very few.

EL: And I think the amazing thing, too, about Gayle is that given her prominent role, prominent perhaps somewhat unofficial role in the staff, unofficial but extremely important role, she never engendered resentment, no one ever disliked her, there was never any, you know, a problem with Gayle. She was always someone that everyone loved and looked up to. So you know, sometimes if you are sort of a separate center of attention or power or something, there will be resentment around you. But not ever [with Gayle], not for a minute.

AJ: Actually, our office was remarkably free, I always thought, of that kind of elbowing of people aside. You know, I mean, I think we had a very disparate staff of people who really didn't have a lot in common personality-wise, but we really didn't have too many egomaniacs, you know, running – I mean like Muskie in the Budget Committee had some guys who were really over the top, you know, like right off the wall. We didn't really attract them that way.

EL: Right, none of the personal staff. And I think that the longevity [] we all had and the working relationships that we had helped the office work well.

AJ: Yes, I mean because Estelle and I had known each other since we first set foot in -

EL: 'Seventy-three.

AJ: Yes, so you know, and I met Mary in '76, so we'd all been around forever, and what is there to, you know.

EL: We were friends as well as colleagues and, you know, that was an important part of it, and it really helped to make for a cohesive whole in the end because the Senator used all of us for whatever our expertise was and he trusted us, and we admired and respected him, and it was an operation that worked.

MM: We knew that he trusted us and that he, we trusted each other. We trusted each other not to big-foot each other, even when we had the Majority Leader's Office and whenever there wasn't, you know, he was very smart about choosing people and he was very cautious about bringing people in until he knew how they would behave.

AJ: I used to write his speeches, right? I mean I used to draft them and he would go over them and so on, and John Hilley, who became the AA after Martha Pope, and John asked me to give him the speeches first so he could read them before they went into Mitchell. Yes, yes, I have no problem with that, you know, so I did that. And then one day George asked me – I was in the office on something else – and he said, "Where's that speech I asked for?" and I said, "I believe it's on John's desk." And he said, "What's it doing there?" And I said, "Well, John likes to look at them before you see them." He buzzed John and said, "Hmm, that would be my

speech, would you bring it in to me,” you know, and I thought, ‘oh dear, oh dear.’ Well, you know, what the hell.

(Speaking at once.)

AJ: But for Mitchell, it worked, and for me it worked, because it was like, look, you know, you’ve been writing this crap for me for years, you know, we don’t need this middle man person, right. Which was basically the signal I got.

MH: Yes, chain of command has never been a high -

AJ: Big thing with him, no.

MH: High value for the Senator.

MM: In fact, probably it was a couple of years. I don’t know, there was one point in time when the Senate – and I can’t even remember what happened, Anita – but we were supposed to put in personnel policies, procedures and practices, and Donna and I had to go to these God-awful painful sessions. And one of the things that they wanted us to do was to draw an organizational chart.

AJ: Good luck.

MM: Yes. I ended up drawing an organizational chart that looked like a wagon wheel. Because that was the only way –

EL: Yes, yes, a circle.

MM: Yes, there was no, what was the word you used, no?

MH: Chain of command, hierarchy.

MM: No, he was it. And you know -

AJ: But I don’t know how you would have a hierarchy, because he wouldn’t keep to it.

EL: No, no, that was not his style. He just went straight to the source: ‘this is what I need, give it to me.’

MM: He was hands-on.

AJ: Right, I mean when we had, you know, the kids writing mail, in the [legislative] shop, when he wanted to talk to them, he talked to them. He didn’t talk to me because, you know, they had to bring the stuff to me, or to somebody else, you know, it was silly. But he, no, he didn’t

care. I don't think we had a chain of command.

MM: I think we all respected each other enough so that we would let each other know what he had said or what was going on.

AJ: Yes, absolutely, you have to keep everybody in the loop, yes.

MM: And we did.

MH: I was very insecure at first, when I got to the office, because I was going to handle foreign affairs and defense and fishing were my areas.

AJ: Fishing, yes.

MH: And I was very insecure, because I would write up draft statements, and the Senator would give them to Anita to rewrite. And so at first I was, you know, really fearful of my job, that I wasn't doing it right and stuff like that. And then I realized that he was giving Anita everybody's statements to rewrite. That was her position, you know, I mean, you know, she made us, she captured his voice I think and, as best anybody could.

AL: And so you would get the facts, and she would add -?

MH: I would write the statement out, and then she'd make it decent.

EL: Round off the edges.

AJ: I used to tell people, if they would just give me the facts I can write the bloody thing up. I can't do the research, you know, I can't cover everybody's job; I don't want to.

MH: But Anita could also, she could type it about, well how many words a minute [could she] type?

AJ: I have no idea, never measured it but, (*unintelligible*) I write fast.

EL: We would never have survived without Anita, churning out those speeches on a dime. And I remember, I remember one year, maybe it was in the Muskie office, how someone was supposed to write a speech on I think it was, was it shoes and leather and so forth, and the staff had utterly failed, and so Anita just turned out a speech in, you know, no time at all, to give to the Senator on the floor, and rebuttal points on top of the speech and all of that and -

AJ: Oh yes, the trade, the hide amendment, the famous "Hyde" Amendment.

MH: The one I remember that was so good was on human rights.

AJ: Oh, the human rights speech, yes.

MH: I can't remember what the, actually went to the floor but it was a -

AJ: It had to do with, there was an assistant secretaryship at the State Department -

MH: Oh, Elliott [Abrams], yes, right, yes.

AJ: That Reagan wasn't filling or hadn't filled or refused, some damn thing like that, you know.

MH: It was an, he had appoint-, it was an assistant secretary of state for human rights, and it was a Scoop Jackson person that he appointed.

AJ: Yes, so it was sort of, I mean it was, it was basically one of those pissing matches that you get between Democrats and Republicans.

MH: But it was a wonderful speech.

AJ: But it was an easy speech to write, because you don't need any facts. Well, human rights, for crying out loud. And then of course in the last, in 1989 the Chinese had the bad taste to murder a whole bunch of students who were in Tiananmen Square registering their disapproval of Chinese government policy. And Mitchell made this statement about how George Bush (the first, right?), by having people go over to meet with the Chinese was essentially kowtowing to the Chinese leadership, and it really got under the White House's skin. I mean they hated that, it drove them nuts. So for the rest of the time until Bill Clinton showed up, and had the same position as George Bush (*unintelligible*), I had to write these damn China statements. So every six or eight months I would be looking up new egregious things that the Chinese had done, or you know, and it was like, oh, after a while it was like needles in a haystack, I mean what have they done that I haven't already talked about. I was so glad for Bill Clinton, because he had the same position as George Bush. Of course we weren't going to do full speeches like that about him.

AL: I'm running out of this tape, so I'm going to stop it right now.

End of Tape One
Tape Two

AL: This is Tape Two of the Round Table Interview on July 21st, 2008. And we were just going to talk a little bit about Larry Benoit. He wasn't able to join us today but he was an important part of the staff over the years. And who would like to start, any recollections you have, what his role was?

MH: I didn't know Larry very well, he was in Maine all the time that I worked in Washington.

I do have one recollection of him that I'll share, and that is that I remember Larry complaining to the Senator that they did not have a good voter list prior to the 1982 election. And Larry was very, very adept at computers and was trying to get a mailing list going, and he prevailed upon the Senator to put David Lemoine in a van, who visited all the town clerks in Maine, and the van was equipped with a, I think it had a generator and a photocopy machine on the van, and as I recall, that if – many of the towns had Republican clerks and they were very reluctant to give out the voter list – and David would, had the law all, he had a little, in his back pocket, and he would read the law to the clerks, and if the clerk still was recalcitrant I think he would call up Tony Buxton, but I can't remember who it was but, and Tony would read them the riot act and that they had to comply, and David would get the list. And you know, in a matter of, I don't know, six or eight weeks, David had the best voter list, much better list than the party had.

EL: David Lemoine, who [is now] the State [of Maine] treasurer.

MH: But I mean, that was the kind of thing that Larry, Larry would then take this data and put it into his computers, which now must – I mean compared to what we have now for computer capacity – it must have been a fairly modest thing, but it was a very computerized campaign.

AJ: But it was also very important for a separate reason, which was that because Mitchell was not well known, comparatively speaking, he wanted to do a lot of mailings, you know, and in those days the Senate was not permitted to mail to "Occupant." You had to have an actual live person's name on the mailing. And if you didn't have a good list, forget about it, you know, you would just be sending mail and money into the clear blue yonder. And part of the function of Larry collecting the list was to give Mitchell a good mailing list, so we were able to break it down by age for Social Security mailings. Came in very handy when Ronald Reagan wanted to, oh, I don't know -

MH: Richard Viguerie, the direct-mail czar, I mean it was very popular.

AJ: Well remember, Reagan wanted to abolish the minimum Social Security benefit, and we went on about these ninety-four little old nuns that were all going to lose their Social Security minimum benefit? It was heart rending, you know. And so, well it did, but they had mailings for the first two years, until he was elected. I mean, I did nothing but mailings. Well, I wrote speeches, but I did the mailings. We had a very typically George Mitchell worked-out system, because I would write the newsletter and put it on, it was semi-computerized, I mean we didn't have real computers in those days but it was one of those semiautomatic typewriter things, and give it to him, he would read it, change what he wanted to change, and I would take it down to the service department, have a blue line, which is the pre-printing thing made up, and we got a turnaround down to about thirty-six hours. Most offices, it took something like three weeks, because so many people felt they had to sign off on everything. Mitchell said, "No one signs, I sign off on it, that's it," you know, forget about it.

MH: But one always had the impression that Larry was kind of on the cutting edge, at least in that campaign, on the computer and the direct mail.

MM: He always was, even, I mean with us, as far as our Internet access. You know we had, even before we had the Internet, we had connection to our state offices through the Internet, or whatever the heck it was called back then.

AJ: Well, we had LexisNexis back [in the mid-'80s].

MM: Yes, but I mean even, I mean we all, we would be able to communicate with people up in Maine electronically, which was a great boon because they'd be gone five thirty, six o'clock, you could send them all the stuff you wanted to, when they came in the next morning, ha-ha, they had their little to-do list.

EL: Well your question relates to Larry, and it's important to say that Larry was always very savvy about politics, and by 1980 he was very experienced too because he had started out with Peter Kyros, who was then in the House, either in the late '60s or very early '70s, because Peter Kyros was defeated in 1972, I believe, or was it '74?

MH: In '74.

EL: 'Seventy-four, and so that means that Larry would have come on the Muskie staff end of '74, '75, and so had already been on Capitol Hill for quite some time. And so of course he was a little bit like Gayle in that he knew everyone, and he knew the way people thought about political issues, and so he was always a very good and close advisor.

MH: I always had the impression that he was also very, very cautious. I mean he was not, he would never speak without being prepared, and he always knew what he was going to say. You never worried that Larry was going to say something off the cuff and get, you know, cause a controversy. I think he's probably one of the most cautious people in the entire staff.

MM: [p/o] He, his loyalty was to George Mitchell, it was not to Larry Benoit. [] Larry was incredibly, incredibly dedicated to Senator Mitchell. And if you look at pictures of Larry during the '82 campaign, you see how much weight he lost, I mean he was just, he worked-worked-worked-worked-worked during that time. And I really think that a large, you know, these folks down in Washington, keeping the whole mill churning and churning and churning but, and Larry was up here and, you know, running that campaign, managing it, making sure that the money was there, that the connections were made, that no phone call went unanswered. I mean, so in addition to just a computer ability, good people ability, it was just an uncanny combination.

EL: I think you see that, I think the hallmark of a good staff, you know, one important indicator, is that each staff person is aware that they have to be careful about what they do, and ultimately never do anything that would result in a public embarrassment of the Senator. So we all have to have that sensibility, and that was just really innate in everyone.

AL: And Larry was from Maine as well, right?

MM: The only time he really went, he went to Washington, after Senator Mitchell announced he wasn't going to run, he went to Washington to be sergeant-at-arms, and then he stayed on with Baldacci for the time that Governor Baldacci was in the Congress. So the rest of the time he was here in Maine, running the Maine operation.

AL: And my question, well my comment was, there were a lot of Mainers on staff that he felt, that he created this great group of Maine people.

EL: Well of course many of us were holdovers from Senator Muskie, and I remember, you know, Senator Muskie ran for president in 1972 and lost in a primary. And when I was hired for Senator Muskie in September of 1973, they told me that while Senator Muskie was going to be up for reelection in 1976, which was three years later, they felt they had a lot of fence-mending to do because people in Maine at that time, '72, '73 were saying, oh, he just wants to be president, he doesn't care about us. So a way that the Muskie office came in countering that was to hire people from Maine. So many of us had already been assembled together as group and, which was great because not only were we colleagues, we were friends, we worked well together, we understood how to get the job done. And when, I guess when the passing of the baton took place from Senator Muskie to Senator Mitchell, Senator Muskie said to Senator Mitchell, "I'd like you to keep on all [of] my staff." And that's what the Senator told us: "I'd like you all to stay until at least 1982, until the election of 1982." So we were fine with that, and it wasn't until I think '94 [sic '84] that people really started to drop off.

AJ: Yes, well after, especially after he announced that he wasn't running.

MH: You mean '84.

MM: I'm sorry, '84. But I mean after that, during that time I mean, there were a lot of people from Maine that were hired and a lot of, he was always very good about ensuring – or course Anita was sort of the den mother of the interns –

AL: But, I mean we're talking about people who weren't with Muskie, like Grace Reef.

MM: Grace Reef, myself.

AL: Kelly Riordan [Horwitz], is that -

MM: Kelly Riordan [Horwitz], Steve Hart, Bob Corolla, Chris Williams, Lisa Nolan had a Maine connection – I'm trying to think of – Diane Smith.

MH: Sarah?

AJ: Sarah Sewall, yes.

MM: Oh yes, I think that Sandy Brown, Sandy was an intern; Kelly Currie was from Maine; David Bragdon.

AJ: He always had a strong preference for Maine people.

MM: One night he called me from the Senate floor and said, "I have an opening here on the floor staff, what do you think about Kelly Riordan for that position?" I mean, there he is the majority leader, doing -

MH: Well, Sue Longley, daughter of his, the person who beat him.

AJ: Actually, I never really forgave George for taking Kelly away.

MM: Well, and even, you know, the younger kids, I mean I can think of tons of them, Josh McIntyre, Jill Ward, Elizabeth Sutherland, I mean they would come down as interns. And another thing that he always did was, he always made sure the interns got paid. There were times when money was really tight, but he always paid a certain number of interns because he believed that it allowed kids from families that didn't have a lot of resources to be interns. Chris Mann, he was there forever.

EL: I think countless interns went on to become lawyers and, you know, do very well in life. I mean it was really, I think he must have recognized as well the singular opportunity it was to work in the Senate, even as an intern, because you picked up on things, you saw how professionals behaved, and you could enlarge your aspirations.

MM: And we just never really hired anybody off the street, we just hired them either because they were interns -

AJ: No, we never had to, because we always knew some-, everybody knew somebody who was -

EL: Yes, I mean sometimes, you know, it was the son or daughter, you know, he knew the father or the mother or something like that.

MM: And sometimes you didn't know them at all. Gary Myrick, he was one of our interns.

AJ: Oh yes, he's still there.

MM: He's there, chief of staff to [Harry] Reid right now, that kid.

AL: It's interesting that you say that about making sure that interns got paid something so that they could afford to do it, because if I'm correct, I believe the Mitchell Institute is trying to do that through the scholarships and -

EL: Well, we'd try to find summer jobs, maybe that's what you're thinking of, is that, I think there are, we try to fill about thirty jobs for various Mitchell Scholars each summer. If someone says I want to be a doctor, we try to get them a job at Maine Med, if they want to be in a certain kind of business we'll try to get them a job in that kind of business, so that they can have, maybe they can job shadow or they have some kind of exposure to what the job would entail and what the environment's like.

AJ: Well it's part of the, when he set up the scholarships, the last year he was in Washington we set up the scholarships, his big point was that the scholarships not always go to the same damn three schools in Portland, you know, that they go around the state, so even unknown high schools from, you know, back of beyond, would have a chance.

EL: Well the way he set it up initially, when all the money was held by the Maine Community Foundation, before anyone ever dreamed that there would be a Mitchell Institute, was that basically students from every high school would compete, and the first two years there were twenty scholars, and then the next two years there were thirty, because there was more money because the stock money had done well. But the rule was that no high school could get a second scholarship until every other high school in Maine had had one []. So that meant that, you know, there are a hundred and thirty public high schools, that if you gave out twenty scholarships per year and we'll say Portland High School got one, then it might be six years before [it was] eligible to get another one. And his, I think the words that impressed me the most were, "Estelle, there are always needy students."

MM: He [p/o] made a pitch that it was unfairly weighted towards the rural schools. And I had brought that up to him, that somebody had said that, and he said, "I know it. I want to do something for those kids."

AJ: Well yes, I think it's a fair enough argument, you know.

EL: I think he said that, you know, he feels that this is truly his lasting legacy. I mean, some might think differently about that subject, but that's how he feels. [] He wants it to go on forever, and he wants to keep helping students. And it's really sort of amazing how, you know, when these scholars are chosen as a senior in high school, a graduating senior, some of them come back two years later and speak at the gala, the fall fund raiser at the Sheraton, at the Marriott in South Portland, and they have poise and self confidence and, you know, they're really developed tremendously, [] they have confidence in themselves, it gives them self esteem, there's a certain cache to it. And so it really does a lot, and that's in part because it's more than a check-writing operation, as most scholarships are. Because we hold their hand, you know, during the whole time and we try to get some of them jobs [p/o], there are two MILE weekends a year, they're sort of out in the wilderness, you know, it's sort of like Outward Bound, where there might be thirty students, Mitchell scholars, who sign up. And we know that the students who participate in the MILE weekends tend to have greater loyalty to the Mitchell Institute and I think give more money once they're out of school, because they really form a bond [p/o]. And so, you know, that's a great thing.

AL: I think I've taken all the time that I promised I would take today, so I just want to say thank you to Mary, Estelle, Mike, and Anita for their time today, and hopefully I'll get to see you all again. Thank you.

End of Interview